

Empedocles, *Physika* 1.278 (*P. Strasb. gr.* Inv. 1665-1666, a(ii)8)¹

In the *editio princeps* of the Strasbourg papyrus of Empedocles, we read the following diplomatic transcription of this line, followed by a restoration:

]NTHΔAICC . . [] . ΔIAM [

[πά]ντηι δ' αἴσσο[ν]τ]α διαμ[περὲς οὐδαμὰ λήγει]

The *mu* at the end of the line is not dotted, although we would have to assume more than half of it is missing. The editors comment on it ‘assurément la partie gauche de M.’² They have been followed in this by all subsequent editors of the papyrus.³ But the traces on the photographs appended to the edition do not seem to fit this reading; images I consulted by the gracious loan of Simon Trépanier have confirmed this. M in this hand is written in one stroke, with steep but smooth sides. By contrast, the letter at the end of a(ii)8 has two strokes, the lower one short, and curving smoothly upwards through almost ninety degrees, the second longer and sloping downwards at about forty-five degrees. The angle between the two is such (approximately thirty degrees) that they can hardly be supposed to have been written in one stroke. The letter is thus almost certainly to be read as Λ; the first stroke of *lambda* is not always as curved as in this example, but there are plenty of parallels for it in this hand (contrast a(ii)25 and a(ii)28 with serifs and those in a(ii)15 without).⁴ Further confirmation for this may be sought by comparing our trace with the final trace of a(ii)29, which is certainly a trace of *mu* (δείγματα μ[ύθων]); the two traces are quite distinct. We have therefore to read in the first instance:

]NTHIΔAICC . . [] . ΔΙΑΛ [

The question of what is to be restored is hampered by the lacunose state of the surrounding lines and the attendant difficulty in following the train of thought. I follow Martin / Primavesi in the restoration of the other words of the line ([πά]ντηι is better than [ἐ]ν τῇ here on grounds of space); the question of what to

¹ I am grateful to Prof. Lindsay Judson who first taught me Pre-Socratic philosophy in 2005, to Prof. Jürgen Hammerstaedt, as a result of whose *Hauptseminar* at the University of Cologne in 2009 I first made this observation, and to Dr. Simon Trépanier, for help and discussion about matters Empedoclean since 2016. It goes without saying that none of them are committed to any of the arguments I advance here. I cite all fragments according to the numeration of Diels / Kranz.

² Martin / Primavesi (1999) 134.

³ Trépanier (2003); Janko (2004); Pierris (2005); Primavesi (2008); Mansfeld / Primavesi (2011); Laks / Most (2017) 416; Trépanier (2018). The text of Graham (2010) is taken from Martin / Primavesi (1999); it is not intended to be an independent contribution to the text of Empedocles, so I do not take it as such.

⁴ As a further support: the trace before ΔΙΑ in this line (a long oblique stroke) is read by Martin / Primavesi (1999) 134 as ‘la partie droite de Λ ou Λ’ (purely palaeographically, Δ can also not be excluded); it is exactly parallel to the oblique in the letter which this paper proposes to read as Λ.

do with the end still remains. Based on Empedocles' phraseology elsewhere, there are two possible ways of restoring these lines:⁵

(1) [πά]ντηι δ' αἴσσον[τ]α διαλ[λάσσει κατὰ κύκλον]

(2) [πά]ντηι δ' αἴσσον[τ]α δι' ἀλλήλων προθέουσιν]

For (1), cf. fr.17.13 and fr.26.12, although κατὰ κύκλον might be thought almost clichéd; περὶ κύκλον is also possible.

For (2), cf. I.285 (a(ii)15), suppl. Janko. Of the available supplements of 285, Janko's is to be preferred, unless Trépanier's θέει αἰεὶ be accepted.⁶ For our purposes, the main contention on which (2) rests is that 278 and 285 should have ended in the same formula, beginning δι' ἀλλήλων, whatever the further details may have been.⁷ No restoration of the line is based on an Empedoclean phrase used elsewhere.

To choose between them, we are more or less reliant on philological reasoning, since the doctrinal details of this passage are shrouded in mystery; we should attempt a reconstruction based on what we can know about the text in front of us before we superimpose doctrinal reasoning on it. We might look for a paraphrase in the doxography, and indeed it has been suggested that Plutarch paraphrased this passage at *fac. orb. lun.* 12 926d-927a, but the paraphrase is not close enough to confirm the new reading.⁸

Empedocles' verse makes extensive use of formulae to construct its argument. Although the lines are fragmentary, we do have some of the particles used to structure the passage; these can act as our guide in identifying the function of individual lines. Before we discuss this, however, we must point out what has changed. Previously, I. 278 looked back to I. 273; thus [πά]ντηι δ' αἴσσοντα picked up and expanded the line beginning, in most editions, [ἐ]ν τῇ δ' αἴσσοντα, the rest of the line being identical.⁹ This connection now only applies to the first half of the line. As my comments above on the details of my supplements have suggested, the line now looks forward, to the text following 278.

Whether (1) or (2) is thought to be most plausible depends, then, on which line in the sequel to 278 is thought to be in responsion to it. If we read διαλ[λάσσει κατὰ κύκλον], the obvious line to which our text answers is 282 (a(ii)12). In fact, the lines practically read like plays on each other: the participle of 278

⁵ Another idea I considered was διάλ[λαξις διατέμνει], but –σις nouns in Empedocles tend to form nominal sentences, rather than to govern predicates.

⁶ Trépanier (2003) 402; Janko (2004) 16, accepted by Pierris (2005) XLIX, Trépanier (2018).

⁷ Martin / Primavesi (1999) 135 restored τε θέεσκεν, *dubitanter*; τε seems unmotivated, and the formula would not fit both contexts. Primavesi (2008) 68 restores γε δραμόντα in both lines, which again would not fit in both contexts (the γε also seems unmotivated).

⁸ Laks / Most (2017) 417 n. 5, 455 (D98).

⁹ The beginnings of both lines are restored differently by different editors, either as [ἐ]ν τῇ or [πά]ντηι; the issue here has little bearing on our discussion.

becomes the main verb of 282;¹⁰ the main verb of 278 becomes a participle with a different preverb; the adverbial phrase with a preposition becomes an adverbial dative. We might however ask if such play is familiar to us from elsewhere in Empedocles. Based on a study of the longer fragments, I venture to suggest that this kind of word-play would be unique.

Let us now consider our second proposal. As already indicated, with (2), 278 looks forward to 285. 285, in turn, has always had the character of rounding a passage off, assuming that the supplement [ὥς δ' αἰὲρ] is correct (I am not aware of another way the beginning of the line has been restored). 278, then, will be the initial hypothesis which 285, at the end of the argument or presentation of evidence, restates. The following considerations support this:

- (1) the γάρ in 279, which introduces a digression – in this case, apparently, pieces of evidence derived from (the behaviour of?) the sun, perhaps also other heavenly bodies.
- (2) the negative particles [οὐ]τε...[οὐ]τε and their contrasting particle [ἀλλ]λά; since ἀλλά, though damaged, is almost certain, the negative particles are also the most likely restoration. In fact, however, all my argument requires is τε...τε, since plainly we have a list of examples, intended to illustrate (if οὐτε, by *negative* example) in what ways things 'run through' each other.

For the textual structure of this passage we could compare the end of a(ii), I.294-300, beginning with the statement of the content (ξύνοδόν τε διάπτυσιν .τε γενέθλης) and ending with the summary and second prospectus (ὅψει γάρ κτλ.).

The doctrinal implications of either choice are, I respectfully suggest, for the philosophers to argue about. It is enough for the moment that the passage be read right. Probably the first may be taken up by those of all doctrinal commitments or none, though my own instinct is that the second is better.

Works Cited

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A. Laks / G. W. Most, *Early Greek Philosophy. Western Greek Thinkers Part 2* (2017)

¹⁰ Accepting αἴσσει with Martin / Primavesi (1999) 135. Trépanier (2003), (2018) reads κρατ]εῖ which Primavesi (2008) 68 n.185 calls 'für die Lücke entschieden zu lang'. This seems rather more definite than can be possible given the state of the papyrus at this point, and given that the difference is a single letter (though the letters Trépanier wishes to restore are broader than Primavesi's). For the sake of argument I follow Primavesi; should it prove that Trépanier is correct, this speaks against assuming the responsion suggested by (1).

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